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ABSTRACT

This report discusses results of a survey that examined the experiences of 3,212 ERASMUS (European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) grant students studying in other Economic Community countries. The study's purpose was to obtain feedback for universities and their departments participating in activities to support student mobility; and provide a basis for evaluation and reconsideration of the program by the Commission of the European Communities and others involved in the decisionmaking and administration of the program on institutional, national, and supra-national levels. Information is assessed concerning students' responses in the following areas: preparation for the study abroad period; advice and support provided by the host university; living in the host country; studying at the host university; accommodations; financial resources and expenses; foreign language proficiency before and after the study period abroad; knowledge of and opinion about the host country culture and society; and academic achievements and recognition of study abroad. Also examined were students' assessments of problems faced during the study period abroad and their integration into the academic and social life of students at the host university. (GLR)

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ERASMUS Monographs No. 13

ED342350

Ulrich Teichler

EXPERIENCES OF ERASMUS STUDENTS

Select Findings of the 1988/89 Survey

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der Gesamthochschule Kassel

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WERKSTATTBERICHTE - Band 32

Wissenschaftliches Zentrum
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Kassel 1991

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ERASMUS Monographs No. 13

This report is based on "Learning in Europe: the ERASMUS Experience" by Friedhelm Maiworm, Wolfgang Steube and Ulrich Teichler (London: Jessica Kingsley, 1991).

The study was commissioned by the ERASMUS Bureau, Brussels, on behalf of the Task Force: Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth of the Commission of the European Communities.

The present report has been prepared in the context of the monitoring and evaluation of the European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS). It is designed primarily for use within the services of the Commission of the European Communities, and although the report is being placed at the disposal of the general public, it is emphasized that the views which it contains are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Commission or of the ERASMUS Bureau, which assists the Commission in the management of ERASMUS.

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1

Aims and Methods of the Survey

In 1989, the Commission decided to support a project aiming to analyze the experiences of a large number of ERASMUS students. A survey was conducted to provide useful information for future students opting for a study period in another EC country, a feedback for universities and their departments participating in the activities aiming to support student mobility; it also provided a basis for evaluation and reconsideration of the scheme on the part of the Commission of the European Communities and various persons and agencies involved in the decision-making and administration of the scheme on institutional, national and supra-national levels.

The study is based on replies from about 3,212 ERASMUS grant students in 1988/89 to the written questionnaire "Survey: Experiences of ERASMUS Students 1988/89". The high response rate of 66.8 percent indicates that the questionnaire was well received by most ERASMUS students and that they were willing to provide feedback of their experience which might be useful to further generations of students, persons in charge of exchange programmes and to those politically and administratively responsible for the ERASMUS scheme in general.

Altogether, about 11,000 students went to another country of the European Community with the support by the ERASMUS programme in 1988/89. Upon request by the ERASMUS Bureau, programme coordinators provided addresses of about 5,000 students. In comparing the 3,212 students actually responding to the questionnaire to the 9,945 students for whom basic statistical information was made available via the administrative reporting procedure[1]

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[1] See U. Teichler, R. Kreitz and F. Maiworm. *Student Mobility within ERASMUS 1988/89.* Kassel: Wissenschaftliches Zentrum für Berufs- und Hochschulforschung 1991; ERASMUS Monographs, No. 12.

about the utilisation procedure of the grants, we note

- an over-representation of students from Belgian and German universities among the respondents and an under-representation of Portuguese, Greek, Irish, Italian, Dutch and Danish students (students from Luxembourg were not represented at all);
- an over-representation of business and engineering students and an under-representation of social sciences among the major fields represented in the ERASMUS programme, though these findings may largely be due to the allocation of students in economics to either business or social sciences;
- an over-representation of students spending more than six months abroad.

On the other hand, the students surveyed hardly differed in their composition by host country, sex, age and timing of the study period abroad from all the students for whom basic data were available. The over-representation and under-representation according to standard statistical criteria, however, does not seem to lead to any substantial bias of the major findings. We calculated that the degree of recognition according to the three criteria presented in Chapter 7 would most likely to be at most about two percent lower, if the sample was representative.

The study was conducted from November 1989 to March 1990, i.e. a few months after the beginning of the subsequent academic year. At that time, all students had not only completed the study period in the host country, but also had experienced life and study at the home university again and thus could view it from the perspectives developed abroad and the extent to which they had acquired formal recognition of their study achievements abroad.

Students were asked to provide information regarding their biography and educational careers; the patterns of the ERASMUS supported period; preparation for the study abroad period; advice and support provided by the host university; living in the host country; studying at the host university; accommodation; financial resources and expenses; foreign language proficiency before and after the study period abroad; knowledge of and opinion about the host country culture and society; academic achievements and recognition of study abroad; summarizing assessment of the life and study period in the host country.

In this study, terms were used in the way they are defined on the cover page of the questionnaire, notably:

- University: all higher education institutions, regardless of their designation in the individual Member States, recognized as eligible for ERASMUS by the competent public authorities.
- Study abroad period: the total study abroad period supported by the ERASMUS Programme. It includes any holiday periods which fall within

the study of placement periods.

- Home country: the country of the university the students were enrolled in immediately before the study abroad period began.
- Host country: the country of the university where the students spent the ERASMUS-supported period abroad.

The concepts as well as the methodology of the study were largely based on the experiences acquired in the framework of a large-scale evaluation project conducted during the 1980s on various types of study abroad programmes and various support schemes, including the Joint Study Programmes, i.e. the support scheme by the Commission of the European Communities preceding the ERASMUS scheme[2].

The study was conducted at the Centre for Research on Higher Education and Work of the Comprehensive University of Kassel (Federal Republic of Germany) and a complete report has now been published. Friedhelm Maiworm, Wolfgang Steube and Ulrich Teichler conducted the study and wrote this report[3]. The research team was headed by Ulrich Teichler, who participated in the above mentioned research project. The word processing was undertaken by Kristin Gagelmann. The study was eased by substantial support from the ERASMUS Bureau, notably from Alan Smith, Inge Knudsen, Irene Magill, and Lesley Wilson. Last but not least, the 3,212 students who each spent more than one hour in completing the questionnaire were the key persons in ensuring a set of comprehensive and interesting findings on the experiences of the ERASMUS students.

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2 Cf. the two recently published volumes: B.B. Burn, L. Cerych and A. Smith, eds. *Study Abroad Programmes*. London: Jessica Kingsley, 1990; S. Opper, U. Teichler and J. Carlson. *The Impact of Study Abroad Programmes on Students and Graduates*. London: Jessica Kingsley, 1990.

3 Friedhelm Maiworm, Wolfgang Steube and Ulrich Teichler. *Learning in Europe: The ERASMUS Experience*. London: Jessica Kingsley, 1991.

2

The Participating Students

2.1 Nationality and Field of Study

For convenience sake, we talk of "British", "French", "Spanish" students etc. in the subsequent text, if we refer to the country of the home university; we do so because all major issues of this study refer to contacts or cooperation between partner universities from the respective countries. One should bear in mind, though, that 3 percent of the ERASMUS students were foreigners, i.e. not citizens of the country of the home university. The quota was 7 percent at universities in the United Kingdom, five percent in Ireland, four percent in France, three in the Federal Republic of Germany, 2 percent in Belgium, and one percent or less in the remaining six countries.

The largest proportion of ERASMUS students were enrolled in business studies (33 percent) during the period abroad, followed by foreign language studies (18 percent), law (11 percent) and engineering (10 percent). Altogether 28 percent, 1 to 4 percent each, were represented in the remaining fields of study or groups of fields presented in Table 1. Seven percent of the ERASMUS students returned afterwards to another field of study in their home universities than the one they were enrolled in prior to the study abroad period.

Table 1
Major Field of Study During Study Period Abroad, by Country of Home University (percentage)

	Country of home university											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Agricultural sciences	0	0	0	2	1	3	0	0	7	0	1	1
Architect., urban/reg. planning	4	2	7	1	2	0	14	7	0	0	3	3
Art and design	2	2	0	2	0	0	1	2	6	0	2	2
Business sc., management sc.	13	42	28	21	35	14	24	20	12	80	43	33
Education, teacher training	1	2	0	1	0	5	1	0	1	0	0	1
Engineering, technology	10	12	37	6	18	14	2	10	1	0	4	10
Geography, geology	0	0	0	3	0	3	1	7	1	0	0	1
Humanities	5	3	0	8	1	0	5	2	1	0	4	4
Lang., philological sciences	11	16	0	33	19	0	15	12	9	0	22	18
Law	30	10	0	8	9	38	9	5	28	0	5	11
Mathematics, informatics	3	2	0	4	2	0	5	0	3	0	1	2
Medical sciences	3	1	2	2	1	8	2	0	1	0	1	1
Natural sciences	2	4	7	3	4	8	4	22	4	20	4	4
Social sciences	5	2	16	3	2	3	8	5	14	0	3	4
Comm./information sciences	2	0	0	0	0	5	1	2	1	0	0	0
Other areas of study	9	0	2	3	5	0	9	5	11	0	7	5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(215)	(801)	(43)	(312)	(672)	(37)	(285)	(41)	(156)	(10)	(637)	(3209)

Question 2.3.b: Please state your major field of study and tick the respective group of fields during the study period abroad.

2.2 Age and Previous Study

About 57 percent of the students were 21-23 years old in 1989, i.e. at the end of their study period abroad. Altogether, only 13 percent were older than 25 years and the average age reported was 23.4 years. Most French (22.3 years on average) and British students (22.4 years) were relatively young, whereas Danish (25.4 years), German, Greek (24.4 years each) and Dutch (24.2 years) were eldest on average.

The differences in the age at the time of the study abroad period reflect to some extent - in addition to age at the time of first enrolment - the timing of the study abroad period in the course of study. As Table 2 shows, 32 percent spent their study period abroad during the third year of study with the fourth and fifth year of study the most frequent options (18 percent and 16 percent). About 12 percent went abroad during their second year of study, and 11 percent during the first year - almost half of the latter at the beginning of their studies. Altogether, 10 percent had already completed five or more years of study before going abroad on an ERASMUS grant.

The timing of the study abroad period was influenced by the subject of study. Students in business studies went abroad at the earliest stage in their course of study: more than a third during the third year or earlier. On the other hand, study periods at relatively late stages were most often reported by students in agriculture, architecture, fine arts, geography and geology, law and medical sciences. The early stage of study abroad in the case of business studies, however, does not merely reflect characteristics of the discipline, i.e. a belief that an experience abroad can be worthwhile at a relatively early stage of knowledge acquisition, but also organizational patterns. The quota of students going abroad in the framework of highly organized and mandatory arrangements is highest in business studies.

Table 2
Study Period in Major Field of Study Completed Prior to Study Period Abroad, by Country of Home University (percentage)

	Country of home university											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Beginner	1	10	0	5	5	3	2	0	2	10	5	5
< 1 year	0	6	2	4	4	0	13	7	2	0	10	6
1 - 1.9 years	2	13	0	2	12	3	5	29	7	0	25	12
2 - 2.9 years	11	30	39	9	43	11	14	32	18	20	54	32
3 - 3.9 years	16	23	20	19	21	22	27	15	21	10	4	18
4 - 4.9 years	56	11	27	38	10	30	21	12	27	20	1	16
5 - 5.9 years	9	5	9	16	4	16	11	2	15	30	0	7
6 - 6.9 years	2	1	2	5	1	3	5	2	6	0	0	2
7 and more years	0	0	0	2	1	14	3	0	1	10	0	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(211)	(775)	(44)	(304)	(665)	(37)	(281)	(41)	(154)	(10)	(630)	(3152)

Question 2.1/2.2: How long was the period of study you had completed in your major field of study prior to your ERASMUS supported period abroad (in years and months abroad)?

2.3 Duration of Stay and Activities Abroad

On average, students surveyed spent 7.1 months abroad in the framework of the ERASMUS grant scheme. As Table 3 shows, 91 percent spent between 3 and 12 months abroad, i.e. a period considered to be the rule in 1988/89 while 3 percent spent less than 2 months. On the other hand, six percent reported a stay abroad supported by ERASMUS for more than one year. In some of those cases, students reported a longer period, although the support as such was not linked to more than 12 months; in other cases, students from those programmes named a longer period in which more than one period of study abroad is required and renewed application is made for support of the same students.

On average, Dutch (4.3 months) and Belgian students (4.4 months) spent the shortest periods abroad. Durations longer than the mean were reported by French (8.5 months), Portuguese (8.1 months), British (7.9 months) and German students (7.6 months), though in most cases a high proportion of - relatively long (9.2 months) - study periods abroad in business studies accounts for the difference. Durations longer than the mean were also reported by students of engineering (7.5 months) and natural sciences (7.1 months). On the other hand, stays abroad of at most three months dominated in agriculture, architecture, fine arts, and communication sciences.

Around 65 percent of the ERASMUS students were solely engaged in full-time study during the period abroad and a further 11 percent in part-time study. Work placements were taken up by 22 percent of students - 18 percent in addition to study and four percent solely in that activity. 2 percent mentioned other study-related activities, such as work on theses. Work placements were most common among students in medical fields (48 percent), business studies, natural sciences (34 percent each) as well as engineering and agriculture (27 percent each). The work placement periods lasted 4.5 months on average.

Table 3
Duration of Period Abroad Supported by ERASMUS, by Country of Home University (percentage)

	Country of home university											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
1-2 months	1	3	0	4	1	0	2	5	11	0	4	3
3 months	37	14	14	21	21	44	28	31	21	0	23	21
4-6 months	54	41	65	37	23	11	50	44	61	20	24	36
7-12 months	8	36	21	35	45	44	18	21	7	80	41	34
More than 12 months	0	7	0	4	10	0	1	0	0	0	8	6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(212)	(797)	(43)	(311)	(667)	(36)	(284)	(39)	(156)	(10)	(632)	(3187)

Question 2.4: Please state the duration of the ERASMUS supported period abroad (including work placement and holiday periods).

2.4 Select Biographical Information

Around 14 percent of the students reported that both parents were graduates from universities, and in a further 23 percent of the cases, only the fathers or - in a few exceptional cases (3 percent) - only the mothers were graduates. Thes percentage of students with higher education-trained parents (either both or one of them) varied substantially according to home country. It was highest in Greece (54 percent) and Belgium (51 percent), between 30 and 40 percent in the majority of EC member states, and lowest in the Netherlands and Denmark (21 percent each).

ERASMUS students were also asked whether they had been engaged in any other activities besides a general educational career pattern for at least six consecutive months. Altogether 23 percent had been engaged in one or several of those activities, namely 10 percent were employed for some period; seven percent spent some time for military service, etc.; six percent participated in vocational training; and five percent reported extended travel. On average ERASMUS students had spent about five months engaged in activities outside the regular educational career patterns.

Some 80 percent had spent some period abroad since they were 15 years old prior to the ERASMUS supported-period with 48 percent even spending some period in the host country prior to their ERASMUS visit. The average total duration of stays abroad was 6.1 months (for all respondents), whereby 1.9 months were spent in the host country. Travel abroad varied to some extent by home country. Notably, students from various southern European countries travelled less prior to the study period abroad.

10 percent of the students lived with a partner immediately before the ERASMUS-supported period abroad, and one percent had children. Almost half of them left their partner behind in the home country and more than half left their children in the home country while studying abroad.

3

Academic and Administrative Support

3.1 Ways and Areas of Preparation

In the framework of the Inter-University Cooperation Programmes under the ERASMUS scheme, most home universities offer preparatory courses, arrange preparatory meetings and possibly provide written material for the students' preparation. The survey shows that

- 67 percent of the students prepared themselves through self-study;
- 58 percent made use of written material provided;
- 51 percent attended mandatory courses of preparation;
- 44 percent took part in preparatory meetings; and
- 33 percent attended optional preparatory courses.

Only five percent stated that they went abroad without any specific preparation for the study period in the host country. The longer the study period in the host country was going to be, the more likely students were to attend preparatory courses.

Participation in preparatory courses was an exception in the case of Portuguese students (13 percent). Less than two thirds of Belgian, Irish and Dutch students attended such courses as compared to more than three quarters of the remaining countries.

More than two thirds of participants in preparatory courses reported that at least some of the courses were part of the regular course programme. This was most often reported by French (83 percent) and British students (79 percent). Only 15 percent of Greek students had preparatory courses which were recognised as part of their regular course programme.

Students were asked to state the extent to which they had taken preparatory action in 4 areas. The proportion of those preparing themselves was:

- 78 percent regarding the foreign language;
- 67 percent regarding practical matters of living in the host country and studying at the host university;
- 67 percent as regards culture and society of the host country; and
- 61 percent regarding academic preparation.

Participation in academic preparation did not differ much according to field of study - most often there was no preparatory foreign language learning reported by students going to the Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium, Greece, and Ireland. These were also the host countries for which the home universities least often prescribed participation in mandatory foreign language courses, as Table 4 shows. Obviously, it is not a widespread knowledge of the host country languages which accounts for this pattern. Rather, in most of these host countries, for which foreign language preparation is least common, some universities have opted to offer at least part of the courses for ERASMUS students in other languages than the host country language.

Mandatory foreign language courses were most often provided for British (63 percent), for French (51 percent) and for German students (36 percent). One should bear in mind that a large proportion of these students participated in course programmes with relatively long, mandatory study abroad components which were also more likely to incorporate elements of mandatory preparation.

ERASMUS students rated the foreign language provisions at their home university more positively than other preparatory provisions. The findings, first, suggest that the ratings were better when the preparatory provisions were more highly organized. Second, the mean scores are so close to the centre of the scale, that improvement of preparatory provisions is needed at many universities according to the students' views.

Table 4
Ways of Linguistic Preparation, by Host Country (percentage)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Written material	16	23	10	20	20	22	26	8	11	22	15	18
Meetings	6	8	7	8	7	5	6	3	3	5	4	6
Courses: mandatory	22	44	7	45	47	27	45	24	19	37	43	41
Courses: optional	21	26	10	32	28	30	20	27	13	32	24	25
Self-study	34	48	40	47	44	42	52	43	35	41	41	44
Not ticked	40	20	43	16	17	35	14	35	50	10	21	22
Total	139	168	117	168	163	163	163	139	130	146	148	156
(n)	(89)	(361)	(30)	(305)	(804)	(40)	(206)	(105)	(171)	(41)	(923)	(3075)

Question 3.1: How did you prepare yourself prior to your stay abroad for the study period abroad? Which courses did you attend?

3.2 Assistance and Advice Provided by the Host University

Altogether, very few ERASMUS students reported that they were hardly provided any assistance and advice by the host university at all:

- only 2 percent were not provided assistance and advice by the host university in any of the practical matters addressed in the questionnaire;
- 8 percent did not have guidance and advice regarding any aspects of the host country culture and society;
- 11 percent had no assistance and advice in academic matters abroad.

However, support and advice regarding language training and personal matters were less often provided with 31 percent and 46 percent respectively stating that they had no assistance and guidance in these respects. Assistance and guidance regarding accommodation and cultural, sports and recreational activities was generally widespread, though 18 percent and 21 percent respectively did not experience any assistance.

Assistance, guidance and support varied substantially by host country. If we calculate the average percentages of ERASMUS students not receiving assistance and guidance regarding the 13 aspects, we note that students who went to Denmark (20 percent), the United Kingdom, and Ireland (23 percent) were least often left without support. Students going to Greece (27 percent), Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany (29 percent), and the Netherlands (30 percent) were frequently without assistance and advice while students going to France (35 percent) and Spain (36 percent) reported more often that they did not experience assistance and advice. Finally, no advice on many aspects was most common in Italy (40 percent) and Portugal (44 percent).

Assistance by the host university was somewhat more positively assessed than preparatory provisions by the home university. Thereby, the degree of satisfaction with the assistance and advice provided by the host university highly correlates with the amount of the assistance and advice provided (correlation coefficients of .6 to .8). This indicates that a high degree of assistance and advice by the host university is highly appreciated as a rule. Assistance provided by Danish and Irish universities was most highly appreciated (2.3 each on average), whereas the extent of assistance provided by Portuguese and Italian universities (3.1 each) as well as by Spanish and French universities (3.0) was most often criticised. The ratings regarding the individual aspects are documented in Table 5.

Students staying longer than a few months abroad expect better means of assistance in getting to know the host country than actually offered. Female students were less satisfied with almost all aspects of assistance by the host university.

Table 5
Degree of Satisfaction with Assistance/Guidance/Advice Provided by the Host University, by Host Country (mean*)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Registration etc. at host univ.	2.3	2.5	1.9	2.8	2.8	2.3	3.1	2.1	2.4	3.0	2.1	2.5
Living accommodation	2.5	2.2	2.2	3.6	2.8	2.7	2.8	2.4	2.7	3.2	2.2	2.6
Matters regarding students financial support	3.1	3.1	2.8	3.7	3.5	3.0	3.5	2.8	3.1	3.6	3.1	3.3
Other practical matters (insurance etc.)	3.1	2.9	2.5	3.4	3.4	2.8	3.4	2.5	2.8	3.7	2.6	3.0
Academic matters	2.2	2.5	2.0	2.6	2.9	2.3	2.9	2.1	2.4	2.8	2.0	2.5
Work placement matters	2.8	2.8	2.3	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.4	2.4	2.4	2.9	2.7	2.9
Orientation on the host country univ.	2.5	2.7	2.0	3.2	3.2	2.8	3.5	2.5	2.8	3.0	2.5	2.8
Language training	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.8	3.2	3.1	2.1	3.2	3.1	2.6	2.7
The host country in general	2.5	2.6	1.9	2.8	3.0	2.4	2.9	2.2	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.7
The local community	2.7	2.8	2.3	2.7	3.2	2.7	3.0	2.4	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.8
Personal matters	2.6	2.8	2.3	3.0	3.2	2.6	3.2	2.4	2.7	2.9	2.4	2.8
Social contacts with host country nationals	2.7	2.7	2.4	2.6	3.0	2.7	3.0	2.3	2.7	2.9	2.7	2.8
Cultural, sports, recreational activities	2.5	2.3	2.6	2.9	2.7	2.7	3.3	1.7	2.5	2.7	1.8	2.4

Question 4.2: To what extent were you provided with assistance/ guidance/advice by your host university? And to what extent were you satisfied with the assistance/guidance/advice provided?
* On a scale from 1 = "very high" to 5 = "very low"

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Obviously, improvement in assistance on part of the host universities was suggested in many cases. Most ERASMUS students appreciate a broad range of assistance and advice, including help to get to know the host country and its culture and regarding personal matters.

4

Study and Experiences in the Host Country

4.1 Cultural and Social Activities in the Host Country

Studies at the host universities are embedded in activities of experiencing the culture and society of the host country in various ways. Learning about and experiencing the host country culture and society is essential in order to cope with life and study in the host country as well as to serve one's own social and cultural needs during the study period in the host country, and is in itself a valuable area of learning which enriches the knowledge and competences in the long run.

Asked about various experiences and activities of getting to know the host country, ERASMUS students mentioned a receptive strategy most often. Three quarters often listened to or read news about the host country. Altogether, activities strongly vary according to the duration of the study period in the host country, as Table 6 shows.

Contacts in the academic context seem to change in opposite directions in the course of the stay abroad. The shorter the duration of the study period abroad, the higher the proportion of ERASMUS students reporting frequent contacts with teaching staff of the host country. On the other hand, frequent discussions and conversations with students of the host country are more often reported, the longer the period abroad was. Obviously, the teaching staff at the host university gets in touch with the incoming students regarding various academic, administrative, social and personal matters, but only some of those contacts are sustained over the months, whereas fellow students at the host university become a more important reference group over the months.

Table 6
Experiences and Activities Abroad, by Duration of Study Period Abroad
(percentage*)

	Duration of study abroad					Total
	1-2 months	3 months	4-6 months	7-12 months	More than 12 months	
Contact with teaching staff of host country	70	62	61	60	55	61
Discussions/conversations with students of host country	59	63	63	74	84	68
Discussions/conversations with other people of host country	39	57	58	56	69	57
Listening to/reading news about host country	41	63	77	80	85	74
Travelling in host country	57	54	52	54	58	54
Visiting museums, attending concerts, theatre, cinema etc.	59	63	61	67	66	64
Joint leisure activities with host country nationals	48	57	57	61	70	59

Question 4.1: Please state the frequency of the following experiences and activities during your study period abroad.

* Percentage 1+2 on a scale from 1 = "very often" to 5 = "not at all"

Activities like visiting museums, attending concerts etc. vary, as could be expected, according to field of study. Students in art and design (84 percent), education (77 percent) and humanities (72 percent) reported that they undertook those cultural activities often, as opposed to students of geology and geography (32 percent), mathematics and information science (47 percent), and agriculture (48 percent). Frequent travel in the host country was reported by about two thirds of geology and geography students as well as by students in art and design, compared to about half of all ERASMUS students.

4.2 Study at the Host University

ERASMUS students participated in an average of 17.2 hours of courses (including laboratory work etc.) at the host universities. The weekly course load abroad was on average 3.4 hours (17 percent) less than that taken at the home university (20.6 hours). Also the information provided about the degree of recognition of study achievements abroad upon return suggests, that ERASMUS students successfully completed about five sixths of the courses they would typically complete at their home university.

Students reported 39 weekly hours spent altogether on studies during regular working weeks at the host university, including practical projects, foreign language learning, independent study, work on theses, field trips, etc. Of this, 9 hours were devoted to independent study, about four hours each for practical projects and work on theses and only 2.5 hours per week on average for language training. The average number of weekly hours spent on study was highest in fields of study which require substantial laboratory work. Besides, the host country's educational systems have an impact on the distribution of study time abroad, as Table 7 shows.

Most students used the opportunity of studying at an university of another EC country to participate in courses complementing those offered at the home university. As Table 8 shows, more than two thirds of the ERASMUS students took courses involving content not available at the home university. About one half experienced new teaching methods, and a third utilized laboratories or other facilities not available or of a lesser quality at the home university. In addition, about half of the students took courses to broaden their academic and cultural horizon which were not required and not directly linked to their area of specialization. Around 45 percent took courses in the host country language and 26 percent courses in other languages. About a fifth of the students reported that they developed a new area of specialization, and a tenth changed their earlier chosen specialization. Altogether, these findings are similar to those reported about students participating in Joint Study Programmes in the mid-eighties.

Table 7
Weekly Hours Spent on Study, by Host Country (mean)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Courses and course-related activities	15.9	14.8	14.9	17.1	18.1	13.1	16.0	15.9	13.7	12.3	17.4	16.7
Practical projects, laboratory work etc.	3.6	4.0	4.0	3.4	3.5	7.5	3.3	3.1	7.1	5.0	5.2	4.3
Independent study	6.9	8.9	12.0	8.4	8.7	7.7	9.2	8.4	8.6	7.6	8.7	8.7
Work on thesis	5.8	4.4	4.1	3.8	3.4	5.2	3.8	2.4	6.9	3.4	3.7	3.9
Field trips, study-related excursions, observations	.8	1.5	1.8	2.3	1.4	4.8	3.1	3.8	1.5	4.0	1.4	1.8
Language training	3.1	3.5	3.3	3.2	2.6	2.2	3.2	3.4	1.2	1.3	2.1	2.6
Other study activities	2.0	1.6	2.8	.9	.9	.4	.6	1.7	1.5	2.0	.9	1.1
Total	38.1	38.6	42.9	39.1	38.7	40.9	39.2*	38.6	40.5	35.6	39.5	39.1

Question 4.3: How many hours per week did you spend on average on the following types of study? Please estimate for the academic study period only (i.e. excluding work placement and holiday periods).
* Estimate (the Italian questionnaire referred to hours per day)

Table 8
Type of Academic Enhancement During Study Period Abroad, by Host Country (percentage)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Take courses inv. content/ topics not avail. at home univ.	75	69	81	63	69	54	67	79	72	52	67	68
Take courses inv. teaching meth. not practised at home u.	36	50	52	38	52	49	41	53	50	37	67	53
Utilize labs. or other facilities (e.g. comp. data anal.)	32	33	23	15	22	36	14	25	35	4	48	31
Take courses to broaden acad. and cultural background	51	52	45	56	46	67	44	67	29	48	44	47
Develop a new area of specialization	31	17	35	14	24	21	21	14	34	22	19	21
Change an earlier chosen specialization	3	7	13	7	7	5	6	5	8	15	10	8
Take language courses in the host country language	36	50	52	50	48	46	44	54	18	26	44	45
Take language courses in other language	25	41	13	24	31	18	8	23	11	0	23	26
Total	290	320	313	267	300	295	247	322	259	204	323	299
(n)	(88)	(353)	(31)	(297)	(782)	(39)	(200)	(92)	(174)	(27)	(909)	(2992)

Question 4.5: During your study period abroad, did you ...? (multiple reply possible)

The host country language was least often (solely or partly) the language of instruction for students going to Greece (10 percent), the Netherlands (31 percent) and Denmark (32 percent), as Table 9 shows. Notably, English was frequently used as a language of instruction for incoming ERASMUS students. Among the relatively small host countries, the language of which is seldom taught in secondary schools in other EC countries and is not widely used internationally, Portugal turns out to be an exception, for almost two thirds of the ERASMUS students going to Portugal were taught in Portuguese.

The longer the study period in the host country, the more likely it became that courses were in the host country language. About half or even more of the students going to Greece, Portugal, Denmark, and the Netherlands, (i.e. those relatively small countries in the European Community whose languages are least common internationally) had visits of short duration - at most three months.

On average the students report substantial differences between higher education in their home and their host universities. The differences perceived between the host and the home universities according to the 12 aspects surveyed were at least 0.9 and at most 1.6 points on the five-point-scale (1 = "strongly emphasized" to 5 = "not at all emphasized"). This finding underscores the variety of higher education systems in the European Community. Largest differences between the host and home universities were perceived as regards emphasis placed on out-of-class communication between teachers and students (1.6), regular class attendance (1.5), oral examinations (1.5), use of publications in foreign languages, and students' freedom to choose specific areas of study (1.4 each).

Table 9
Language of Instruction* During Study Period Abroad, by Host Country (percentage)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Host	32	71	16	62	73	5	74	86	12	64	89	71
Home	29	1	26	0	7	10	4	2	41	6	1	6
Host + home	8	4	0	6	4	0	6	1	7	6	2	4
Home + other	0	0	3	0	0	5	1	0	4	3	0	0
Host + other	10	19	16	22	11	5	12	7	5	6	6	11
Host + home + other	11	4	0	4	4	0	1	4	7	6	2	4
Other	10	1	39	6	0	75	2	0	25	11	0	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(90)	(356)	(31)	(305)	(818)	(40)	(206)	(103)	(169)	(36)	(944)	(3098)

Question 4.6: What was the language of instruction in the courses you took at the host university? If you were taught in more than one language, please state percentages.
* "Home" was coded if host country language and country of home university language were identical.

4.3 Problems Faced During the Study Period Abroad

Altogether, 58 percent of the ERASMUS students named problems of living and organizing the conditions of study in the host country. Around 34 percent mentioned problems of social contacts, 31 percent problems of study, and 20 percent stated foreign language problems. One fifth did not rate any of the 19 possible problems posed as serious.

As regards living and organizing conditions of study abroad, problems of accommodation were felt by 22 percent of the ERASMUS students. Problems regarding administrative and financial matters were reported almost equally often (21 percent each), as Table 10 shows. In comparison to students participating in Joint Study Programmes surveyed in the mid-eighties, ERASMUS students reported less administrative problems, but somewhat more problems of accommodation (22 percent as compared to 17 percent), a quiet place for self-study, and guidance regarding non-academic matters.

Administrative problems were most often faced by ERASMUS students in Italy (45 percent) followed by those who had spent the study period in France (30 percent), Portugal (29 percent), and the Federal Republic of Germany (27 percent), whereas least problems were reported by students who went to Ireland, Greece, and the United Kingdom (less than 10 percent each). Conversely, Irish (41 percent) and British students (40 percent) were much more frequently confronted with problems in administrative matters abroad.

As regards academic matters, few students experienced problems regarding the academic level of courses at host universities (8 percent). Problems regarding guidance on academic matters (18 percent), differences in teaching and learning styles (17 percent) and regarding the readiness of teachers to meet and help students (15 percent) were most often stated. Most academic problems were experienced by students who spent their study period abroad in

- Italy (23 percent on average regarding five aspects surveyed as compared to 13 percent of all countries), where guidance on academic matters and readiness on part of the teachers to meet and help students was especially missed;
- France (20 percent), where lack of readiness on part of the teachers to meet and help students was reported frequently;
- Germany (17 percent) where host students relatively often had problems concerning the academic level of courses (15 percent), and Spain (17 percent), where host students referred overproportionally to differences in class size (15 percent); whereas
- students going to Ireland, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Denmark reported very few academic problems (5-7 percent on average of the various aspects).

As regards home country, we note that British (28 percent on average) and Irish students (20 percent) felt more often problems on academic issues abroad than students from all other countries (7 - 13 percent respectively). They had problems not only regarding contacts, class size, guidance, teaching and learning styles (the latter only in the case of British students), but also related to the academic level of courses at the host university. As British and Irish students did not report less academic progress abroad in comparison to that at home, than German and Danish students did, these findings suggest that British and Irish students faced problems with the educational environments abroad putting less emphasis on contacts between teachers and students and on good teaching practice, but that this experience led only in a limited number of cases to low academic achievement.

15 percent of the ERASMUS students taught abroad predominantly or exclusively in a foreign language faced significant problems as regards taking examinations in a foreign language. Students reported more problems in taking examinations, the longer their period of study at the host university lasted. In general, one could certainly infer that a serious immersion into the academic life at the host university only occurs, if the study period abroad lasts at least three months and that study and examinations abroad are more demanding, if the study period at the host university lasts about one academic year.

Many ERASMUS students disliked the many contacts with people from their own country. Few difficulties were felt regarding the lifestyles of host country nationals or the climate, food, etc. abroad.

Table 10
Problems During Study Period Abroad, by Host Country (percentage*)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Taking courses in a foreign language	14	18	21	9	10	14	15	6	15	13	5	10
Taking examinations in a foreign language	9	25	17	8	18	10	21	9	15	8	11	15
Academic level of courses	12	15	8	8	9	5	12	5	4	3	4	8
Differences in teaching/learning betw. home and host univ.	14	16	11	22	24	10	28	7	11	20	12	17
Readiness of teachers to meet/help foreign students	11	20	7	15	27	9	29	3	8	15	4	15
Differences in class or student project group size	7	15	0	15	14	10	8	2	3	10	4	9
Administrative matters	17	27	21	22	30	7	45	6	11	29	9	21
Financial matters	21	21	20	29	21	12	34	17	14	24	19	21
Guidance concerning academic programme	16	20	11	24	26	15	36	10	10	27	8	18
Guidance concerning non-academic matters	13	9	7	17	18	10	24	3	8	18	4	12
Finding place to concentrate on studies outside class	4	5	10	21	17	12	26	19	5	45	9	13

(to be cont.)

(Table 10 cont.)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Accommodation	23	17	17	38	24	23	30	20	30	36	15	22
Climate, food, health etc.	5	4	0	7	7	9	5	16	3	3	15	9
Lifestyles of nationals in host country	7	2	3	4	5	5	4	8	6	3	8	5
Interaction among/with host country students	14	7	14	10	18	7	12	8	12	18	9	12
Not enough contact with people from your own country	4	3	3	2	4	2	5	3	5	0	4	4
Too much contact with people from your own country	18	25	14	19	29	24	23	25	13	21	31	26
Communicating in foreign language outside the class	7	8	21	4	8	23	8	5	14	24	6	8
Not enough time available for travel	12	18	14	18	21	9	19	12	16	30	25	20

Question 6.1: To what extent did you have significant problems in any of the following areas during your study period abroad?

* Percentage 1 + 2 on a scale from 1 = "very serious problems" to 5 = "no problems at all"

4.4 Integration into the Academic and Social Life of Students at the Host University

As to the extent to which they felt integrated into the academic life and into the social life of students at the host university, students replied cautiously positive. On a scale from 1 = "to a great extent" to 5 = "not at all", the mean ratings were both 2.5. The ratings were the higher, the longer the period abroad lasted: they ranged from 2.8 both in the case of stays of 1-2 months to 2.0 or 2.1 in the case of students staying abroad for more than one year.

ERASMUS students felt most integrated in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany and Spain. French students felt the highest degree of integration in the academic life of the host universities (2.1), whereas British students felt academically least integrated (3.1). As regards social integration, a similar pattern can be observed, though the difference is somewhat smaller (2.2 and 2.8).

5

Accommodation in the Host Country

5.1 Main Modes of Accommodation in Home and Host Country

About half of the students supported by the ERASMUS programme were provided with university accommodation (halls of residence furnished by universities or other agencies for the accommodation of students) during the study period at the host university. As Table 11 shows, about a third of the students had an apartment or house abroad which they shared with other students (we cannot exclude that some students provided with university accommodation have ticked this category instead of the previous one).

The proportion of ERASMUS students provided with university accommodation varies strongly according to host country, as Table 11 shows. The majority of students going to the United Kingdom, the Federal Republic of Germany (65 percent each) and France (59 percent) lived in halls of residence as well as almost half of the students spending their study period abroad in Denmark and Italy (48 percent each). Students going to Greece and Belgium lived in apartments or houses together with other students as frequently as in university accommodation (38 percent). It must be added that more students going to Greece lived in hotels or pensions (26 percent) than students going to other countries. Students going to the Netherlands and Portugal were twice as likely to share an apartment or room with other students than to stay in university halls of residence (29 and 24 percent respectively). Finally, few students going to Spain (17 percent) and Ireland (9 percent) lived in university halls of residence during their study abroad period. Living in apartments or houses together with other students or in rooms with private families was more common or at least as frequently taken as university accommodation.

Table 11
Accommodation During Study at Host University, by Host Country (percentage)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
University accommodation	37	64	47	17	58	37	47	8	29	24	64	51
Apartment/house together with other students	35	20	38	60	27	40	39	50	48	49	31	34
Own appartement/flat	2	2	0	2	2	0	2	3	3	0	0	2
Apartment/house with parents/relatives	2	2	3	1	0	0	1	4	1	0	0	1
Apartment/house with partner and/or children	2	1	0	3	1	0	1	2	1	5	1	1
Room in private home with another familiy	9	11	6	16	9	0	2	34	10	17	8	10
Hotel/pension/boarding house	11	2	6	12	4	26	12	3	4	12	2	5
Other	3	4	3	2	3	0	3	5	9	0	1	3
Not ticked	1	2	3	2	2	2	0	4	2	0	1	2
Total	102	107	106	113	107	105	109	111	105	107	109	108
(n)	(94)	(371)	(32)	(314)	(849)	(43)	(210)	(109)	(188)	(41)	(961)	(3212)

Question 5.1: Where did you live most of the time during your studies at your home university and during the study period abroad?

The longer the duration of the study period abroad, the higher the percentage of students living in university halls of residence. An exception in this respect were those students staying abroad supported by the ERASMUS scheme for more than one year; most of these students lived in apartments or houses together with other students.

The majority of students (61 percent) stayed in the same place for the whole study period abroad, 21 percent moved once, and 18 percent twice or even more often. On average, students had 1.7 homes during their study period abroad. Around 30 percent of the students participating in work placement abroad had to change accommodation, because the location of the work placement was far away from that of the host university.

5.2 Provision of Accommodation and Time Spent on Search

ERASMUS students were asked what kind of assistance and advice they were given by the host university as regards accommodation and how satisfied they were with the assistance provided. 52 percent of the students rated the extent of assistance and advice as "substantial" and 30 percent as "modest", while 18 percent reported no assistance in this respect. By far least assistance and advice regarding accommodation was provided to students who went to Spain (no assistance to 48 percent) and to Portugal (31 percent).

When asked in more detail about the role of the host university (staff as well as students) in finding accommodation,

- 57 percent of students reported that regular accommodation was provided;
- 8 percent were provided temporary accommodation;
- 15 percent had at least assistance for own search for accommodation;
- 11 percent reported that they had no support regarding accommodation; and
- 10 percent had their own accommodation arrangement and had therefore informed the university that they did not need any support.

Students of the host university played some role in finding accommodation for the incoming ERASMUS students. They found regular accommodation in 7 percent of the cases and temporary accommodation for 2 percent of the guest students. A further 12 percent of the students reported other kinds of help by the host university students: finding accommodation in cooperation with the university staff or assisting the incoming students in their own search.

ERASMUS students spent on average 10.5 hours searching for accommodation. Although 68 percent of the students stated that they did not spend any time in searching for accommodation, 20 percent reported spending

up to 20 hours in finding accommodation, a further 5 percent up to 40 hours, and finally 7 percent more than 40 hours. Differences according to host country were remarkable. Whereas students going to Denmark spent one hour on average searching for accommodation, those going to Spain spent 21 hours.

Only 59 percent of the students could move directly into a regular room or other kind of accommodation upon arrival. 41 percent had to spend a waiting time, lasting up to one week for 24 percent, up to one month for a further 14 percent, and more than one month for 3 percent.

5.3 Problems Encountered in Search for Accommodation

The three problems most often encountered in the search for accommodation refer to the housing market: expensive accommodation (27 percent), scarcity of accommodation (25 percent), and poor quality of available accommodation (19 percent). Another problem recorded by 13 percent of students that most of the accommodation available was too far away from the university or too inconveniently located in general.

Problems related to the foreign students' abilities of search (did not know where and how to look, had language difficulties) were mentioned less often, as Table 12 shows. Other less common problems were experienced because owners, landlords, etc. did not like students (6 percent), their nationality, religion or colour (4 percent) or their sex (1 percent).

Table 12
Problems Encountered in Search for Accommodation Abroad, by Host Country (percentage, multiple reply possible)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Did not know where and how to look	12	10	6	25	13	23	15	15	13	17	6	12
Had language difficulties	3	7	0	16	8	23	11	6	9	24	5	8
Accommodation was scarce	13	27	13	48	24	19	32	21	27	34	17	25
Quality of accommodation available was mostly poor	19	6	13	35	15	21	12	46	15	17	22	19
Accomm. available too far from univ., inconv. located	6	7	13	24	12	7	15	30	9	17	13	13
Accommodation was expensive	7	15	19	50	25	33	34	27	27	24	26	27
Too busy studying etc.	1	3	0	4	3	0	5	3	5	2	2	3
Some owners/landlords etc. do not like students	4	6	3	11	8	5	6	5	3	0	4	6
Difficulties because of nationality/religion/ colour	4	3	0	8	6	0	4	1	2	2	1	4
Difficulties because of sex	1	1	0	5	1	0	1	2	0	0	1	1
Other	5	5	0	10	6	7	8	10	3	2	5	6
Not ticked	62	65	75	26	58	51	55	34	57	49	61	56
Total	138	156	141	262	179	188	199	198	169	190	161	179
(n)	(94)	(371)	(32)	(314)	(849)	(43)	(210)	(109)	(188)	(41)	(961)	(3212)

Question 5.9: What problems did you face in the search for accommodation?

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5.4 Quality of Accommodation

Altogether, ERASMUS students in 1988/89 were not dissatisfied with their accommodation in the host country. On average, they rated 2.6 on a scale from 1 = "very good" to 5 = "very bad". They considered accommodation abroad, however, clearly worse than accommodation at home which was rated 1.8 on average. 22 percent of the ERASMUS students rated their accommodation abroad as bad (scale points 4 and 5), but only 5 percent did so on accommodation at home. Thereby, university accommodation was not rated more favourably (2.7) than other kinds of accommodation in the host country (2.6).

Two host countries clearly stood out in quality of accommodation provided. 87 percent of ERASMUS students studying for some period in Denmark rated housing provided there as good; they considered it better than accommodation in their respective home countries. Accommodation was viewed second best in the Federal Republic of Germany, where 71 percent of the host students rated it as good; this matches more or less the quality of accommodation in the home countries of students going to Germany. A high rating for accommodation was given less frequently by students hosted in Portugal (63 percent), Italy (54 percent), the Netherlands (53 percent), Spain (51 percent), the United Kingdom (45 percent), Greece (42 percent), and Belgium (38 percent). Accommodation was considered most poorly and least matching accommodation in the respective home countries by students going to France (33 percent negative as compared to 35 positive ratings) and Ireland (32 percent as compared to 37 percent).

The commuting time between the university and the place were students lived is undoubtedly an important element of the quality of accommodation. Only 16 percent rated their accommodation as inconveniently located for the host university, with the threshold of problematic location an average return journey lasting more than 50 minutes. On average, students spent 30 minutes daily travelling to the university and back.

Many ERASMUS students reported that accommodation played an important role in establishing contacts to host country students (53 percent rated 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very much" to 5 = "not at all") and - to the same extent - to students or other people from other countries (56 percent). University accommodation turned out to be helpful in establishing contacts to students, but was of less help than other accommodation in establishing contacts to other host country people. Thus, accommodation policies regarding foreign students set the frames as well for the kind of social contacts most likely to emerge.

6

Costs and Financing of the Study Period Abroad

6.1 Monthly Expenses Abroad and at Home

On average, the ERASMUS students responding to the questionnaire section on costs and funding (less than two thirds of all respondents) spent about 419 ECU per month during the study period abroad in 1988/89 (excluding tuition and fees as well as excluding roundtrip fare to the host country). As Table 13 shows, the monthly average expenses varied substantially by host country. Students going to Denmark spent 506 ECU on average, and those going to the United Kingdom, Ireland, Italy and Spain about 450 ECU. Students going to Greece spent about 400 ECU, those going to France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany somewhat less, and those going to Portugal only 331 ECU. The differences found by host country do not consistently match assumptions about differences of general living expenses. There are various factors which might lead to unexpectedly high expenditures, for example shortage of reasonable accommodation, relatively short study periods which might lead to higher costs per month, difficulties of students to adjust to food and lifestyle prevailing in the host country, etc. On the other hand, general subsidies to studies, food, accommodation etc. in some countries serve the host students as well and thus reduce the costs of living abroad.

While studying at home ERASMUS students had spent 355 ECU monthly on average, i.e. 64 ECU (18 percent) less than abroad. Danish students spent 472 ECU, and British, German, Italian or Dutch students more than average. French, Spanish and Belgian students spent somewhat more than average, whereas Irish, Greek and Portuguese students spent less than 300 ECU.

Table 13
Monthly Expenditures During the Study Period Abroad*, by Host Country (mean in ECU)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Books and other study-related supplies	27.1	20.5	25.9	26.4	21.5	28.9	25.1	25.0	29.6	18.7	30.8	25.8
Accommodation	107.5	115.3	184.3	154.7	124.0	132.6	148.0	152.9	132.0	97.0	171.1	143.4
Travel to university	9.3	16.3	16.1	14.1	16.6	11.7	16.5	15.1	17.2	22.3	14.5	15.4
Other travel	35.7	32.2	66.5	43.2	40.2	66.0	51.0	48.1	37.6	21.9	44.6	42.0
Food, common household, clothes, hygiene etc.	178.0	157.2	180.0	175.8	164.1	151.6	173.4	183.9	135.2	144.3	172.0	166.7
Other expenses	20.7	17.0	33.6	28.5	24.6	18.5	31.5	25.2	35.4	26.7	26.2	25.7
Total	378.3	358.4	506.3	442.6	391.0	404.3	445.4	450.3	387.1	330.9	459.2	419.1
Return travel abroad	34.2	22.9	43.9	32.9	21.5	74.1	37.6	40.0	29.7	74.9	29.8	29.7
(n)	(65)	(214)	(26)	(195)	(482)	(23)	(130)	(70)	(115)	(27)	(575)	(1922)

Question 2.9: Apart from tuition fees and related expenses: How much, on average, did you spend per month during term time during your study period abroad and while studying at home? Please state the amount in the currency of the country of your home university.

* Excluding tuition and fees and excluding return travel

On average, the roundtrip travel costs to the host country added 30 ECU to the monthly expenses abroad. This varied from around 75 ECU among those going to Portugal and Greece to around 22 ECU of those going to France and Germany. Both the peripheral location of the former countries within Europe as well as the relatively short duration of the study period abroad explain the relatively high proportion of roundtrip travel costs among the average monthly expenses during the ERASMUS-supported study period abroad.

On average, monthly expenses abroad including roundtrip travel amounted to 449 ECU (not including additional costs for tuition and fees). They were 94 ECU (26 percent) higher than monthly expenses at home.

A discussion with a selected number of ERASMUS students arranged by the Commission of the European Communities leads us to believe that students did not state the costs they continued to have at home during the period abroad. Based on the experiences of that meeting, we estimate that about a third of the students keep their accommodation in the country of their home university while studying abroad. If this estimate is appropriate, monthly expenses abroad - excluding roundtrip fare to the host country - are on average 105 ECU (29 percent) higher than monthly expenses at home. Including roundtrip fare to the host country, the average monthly expenses abroad surpass those at home by 135 ECU (37 percent). Table 14 provides information about the additional costs ERASMUS students from different countries had during their study period abroad. One should have in mind though, first, that the proportion of students paying for accommodation in the home country while studying abroad might vary substantially by home country. Second, students report on average higher tuition and fees during the study period abroad than while studying at home. Since information was not precise in many cases, no estimates are provided in Table 14. It might be appropriate, though, to add about a further 10 ECU per month on average.

In taking account only of the monthly costs abroad stated (excluding roundtrip travel) we note that

- 16 percent of the ERASMUS students had at least 10 percent less expenses abroad than while studying at home;
- 18 percent had about the same expenses abroad they had at home (between 10 percent less and 10 percent more);
- 35 percent had between 10 and 50 percent additional costs abroad; and
- 31 percent had more than 50 percent additional costs abroad.

In adding the estimated costs for keeping accommodation in the country of the home university while studying abroad (excluding roundtrip travel) we come to the conclusion that nine percent of the ERASMUS students had at least ten percent less expenses abroad, 14 percent had about the same expenses abroad,

36 percent had 10 to 50 percent higher costs abroad, and 41 percent had more than 50 percent additional costs abroad.

Table 14
Additional Monthly Costs During the Study Period Abroad, by Country of Home University (mean in ECU)

Country of home university	Excluding roundtrip travel		Including roundtrip travel	
	Additional costs stated	Additional costs including continued costs at home*	Additional costs stated	Additional costs including continued costs at home*
Greece	265	283	328	346
Denmark	126	180	170	224
Ireland	115	139	150	174
Portugal	102	113	161	172
Spain	111	138	138	165
Italy	85	118	129	156
Germany	91	130	116	155
Belgium	81	112	108	139
France	60	98	85	123
Netherlands	49	90	79	120
United Kingdom	-6	51	28	85
Total EC	64	105	94	135

* Estimate based on the assumption that a third of the ERASMUS students keep their accommodation in the country of the home university while studying abroad.

6.2 Resources of Funding Study Abroad and at Home

Almost all students provided information about the sources which they used for financing the study period at the host university. As Table 15 shows, about 42 percent of the expenses of their study period abroad were financed by the students themselves or their families, 35 percent by the ERASMUS grant and 19 percent by other grants and loans. The ERASMUS grant covered about half of the expenses for Portuguese, Italian, Greek, Belgian and Spanish students, about a third for German and Irish students and slightly more than a

fourth for French, Danish, Dutch and British students. French students had to cover the highest proportion of the ERASMUS supported period by help of their families and by own means (53 percent), followed by German and Greek students (47 percent each). On the other hand, Danish (8 percent), Portuguese (13 percent) and Dutch students (20 percent) reported the lowest private contribution to the ERASMUS supported period abroad, because of home country grants covering a high proportion of their expenses abroad (39, 33 and 41 percent respectively).

Table 16 shows that ERASMUS students and their parents have paid more than two thirds (69 percent) of the expenses of the students while studying at their home university. The corresponding proportion was 42 percent for the study period abroad, as already reported above. The information provided by the students suggests that parents and students themselves covered 246 ECU of the monthly expenses at the home university, and 188 ECU of the expenses abroad. The absolute amount of other grants and loans was more or less the same on average for the study period abroad as for study at the home university.

In combining the replies to the questions on expenses abroad (absolute figures were asked for) and those on the financial sources (percentages were asked for), we estimate that the average monthly ERASMUS support for the students surveyed who provided respective information was 158 ECU in 1988/89. This does not include ERASMUS support used for costs prior to the study abroad period (notably language courses). The monthly ERASMUS support, thus, surpassed that of the average additional expenses abroad (including return travel to the host university and including estimated costs for keeping accommodation at home) by about 20 ECU. Even including the estimate about additional tuition and fees abroad to be paid by some students, we conclude that the ERASMUS grants in 1988/89 on average covered the additional costs associated with study abroad.

Notably, Italian, Belgian and Spanish students reported higher ERASMUS grants than additional costs abroad. On the other hand, the ERASMUS grant did not cover the average additional costs particularly in the case of Greek, Danish and Irish students who reported higher expenses during the study period abroad.

Table 15
Financing of Study Period Abroad, by Country of Home University (percentage)

	Country of home university											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
ERASMUS grant	51.2	36.3	25.4	50.1	28.5	49.3	54.3	34.4	28.5	55.0	27.6	35.2
Other EC programme grant	.0	.1	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.2	.1
Home country grant/scholarship	2.2	1.7	38.8	6.3	7.8	1.7	1.9	16.6	40.9	32.5	29.6	13.0
Home country loan	.2	10.3	15.1	1.0	3.2	.0	.0	7.9	5.9	.0	1.4	4.5
Host country grant/scholarship	.7	.1	4.6	.4	.5	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.6	.4
Support by work placement or employer	.3	1.2	.3	.0	2.2	.0	.0	3.7	.0	.0	3.2	1.6
Other type of support abroad	.8	.4	.0	.4	.4	.0	.5	1.5	.3	.0	.2	.4
Other grants	.0	.2	7.7	1.1	1.8	2.4	.8	2.7	1.1	.0	.9	1.0
Parents, relatives	36.9	32.5	1.7	30.1	42.6	35.2	33.6	12.5	11.3	7.5	27.9	31.6
Own money (work, savings)	6.6	14.5	6.7	10.4	10.6	11.3	7.9	20.7	9.6	5.0	7.0	10.4
Other	.4	1.0	1.8	.2	1.7	.0	.3	.0	2.0	.0	.5	1.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(n)	(124)	(514)	(36)	(122)	(392)	(29)	(116)	(31)	(108)	(4)	(446)	(1922)

Question 2.7: How have you financed your study at your home university up to now, and how did you finance your ERASMUS-supported study period abroad (including travel and tuition fees if any)? Please estimate percentages (including possibly value of free rent, etc.). If applicable, state the name of the support scheme or of the supporting agency.

Table 16
Financing of Study at Home University, by Country of Home University (percentage)

	Country of home university											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Other European Community programme grant	.0	.3	.0	.0	.1	1.7	.0	1.3	.5	.0	.0	.2
Home country grant/scholarship	8.4	1.5	52.5	21.8	13.4	7.2	4.7	39.2	60.7	5.0	45.8	21.1
Home country loan	.7	15.6	18.4	1.1	3.0	.0	.0	4.5	9.8	.0	1.8	6.3
Support by work placement or employer	.0	.8	1.1	.1	.8	.7	.0	3.2	.7	.0	1.4	.8
Other grants	.1	.4	.3	1.1	.9	.3	1.7	2.6	.5	.0	1.1	.8
Parents, relatives	81.6	58.4	4.1	65.0	67.9	76.2	82.4	24.6	15.7	87.5	41.0	56.0
Own money (work, savings)	8.4	21.2	23.6	10.0	11.6	13.1	10.2	23.6	10.5	7.5	7.1	13.1
Other	.3	1.5	.0	.9	2.0	.7	.3	1.1	.9	.0	1.0	1.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(n)	(124)	(514)	(36)	(122)	(392)	(29)	(116)	(31)	(108)	(4)	(446)	(1922)

Question 2.7: How have you financed your study at your home university up to now, and how did you finance your ERASMUS-supported study period abroad (including travel and tuition fees if any)? Please estimate percentages (including possibly value of free rent, etc.). If applicable, state the name of the support scheme or of the supporting agency.

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6.3 Financial Problems during the Study Period in the Host Country

Students were provided with a list of 19 categories of possible problems during their stay abroad (see Table 10). On a scale from 1 = "very serious problems" to 5 = "no problems at all" financial problems were rated more seriously on average (3.5) than any other possible problem. Actually, 21 percent of the students reported serious financial problems (1 or 2). This proportion was by far the highest among Irish ERASMUS participants (54 percent). Serious problems were also stated above average by Greek (34 percent), Portuguese (30 percent), British (28 percent) and French students (24 percent). Least problems were reported by Danish students (2 percent), whereas 15-21 percent of the students from the remaining countries stated financial problems.

Financial problems vary to a much lesser extent according to the host country. Students going to Italy (34 percent), Spain (29 percent) and Portugal (24 percent) reported more frequent problems than those going to other countries.

Altogether, the information provided by the students suggests that the ERASMUS grant on average covers the additional actual expenses abroad. This does not necessarily mean, however, that the ERASMUS grant solves all problems related to additional costs of a study period abroad. Some students report that the ERASMUS grant covered less than the additional expenses for the study period abroad. Students might have opportunities of earning money while studying at home which do not exist while studying abroad. Information about the actual expenses does not reveal how many students might have been compelled to choose thriftier living conditions abroad. Finally, a survey on ERASMUS students by definition cannot reveal how many students did not apply for ERASMUS support or did not go abroad when offered ERASMUS support because they considered the financial support too small.

7

Recognition and Academic Impacts

7.1 Need for Varied Measures of "Recognition"

Recognition of the ERASMUS supported period in another EC country upon return is one of the most crucial measures of success of the ERASMUS scheme. In principle, ERASMUS support is only granted to universities willing to recognize the academic achievements of their students upon return. This emphasis on recognition is based on the assumption that a study period in another country of the European Community will most likely become an integral part of studies, if successful study at a host university substitutes study loads or study periods at home[1] .

In the questionnaire survey of ERASMUS students 1988/89, we chose three different measures of recognition:-

- *Degree of recognition*: the degree to which the academic study actually undertaken at the host university was recognized or otherwise considered equivalent to study at the home university;
- *Degree of correspondence*: the degree of correspondence of the amount of study actually undertaken abroad to study usually expected at home; and
- *Non-prolongation*: the expected non-prolongation of the total duration of studies due to the study period at the host university.

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1 Cf. U. Teichler: *Recognition - A Typological Overview of Recognition Issues Arising in Temporary Study Abroad*. Kassel: Wissenschaftliches Zentrum für Berufs- und Hochschulforschung, 1990 (ERASMUS Monographs, No. 3).

Around 69 percent of the students provided information on the degree of recognition, 64 percent estimated the degree of correspondence of study at the host university to that at the home university, and 87 percent replied to the questions regarding possible prolongation of studies due to study abroad.

7.2 Degree of Recognition, Correspondence and Non-Prolongation

68 percent of the students reported that all their study at the host university was recognized or otherwise considered equivalent at the home university. On the other hand, 17 percent were credited less than a fourth of their study at the host university. On average, 23 percent of the studies successfully completed abroad were not recognized upon return.

An average of all responses shows that academic studies at the host university corresponded to 73 percent of the typical amount of study at the home university. As 77 percent of the studies abroad were recognized and as the study load actually taken abroad or the number of courses completed abroad is about one sixth lower than that typically carried out or completed during a corresponding period at home, one could have expected that the academic studies at the host university corresponded to a lesser extend to the typical amount of study at home.

Only 40 percent of the students reported that the amount of study abroad equalled that at home or even surpassed it. As Table 17 shows, a further 41 percent had a study load abroad of at least half of that typical at home, and 19 percent less than half of that at home.

On average, ERASMUS students expect 3.4 months prolongation due to their study period abroad. The prolongation expected corresponds to 53 percent of the study period abroad (the figures refer to students providing information both on prolongation and duration of the period abroad). The ratio of prolongation does not vary substantially according to the duration of the study period. Only in cases where students go abroad with the help of the ERASMUS scheme for more than one year, study periods abroad are so closely integrated into the curriculum that only eight percent of these students expect a prolongation due to the study periods abroad.

Again, we can refer to the number of students not expecting prolongation. As Table 18 shows, 56 percent of the students do not expect a prolongation of their studies. 12 percent assume that there will be a prolongation due to study abroad, though shorter than the period they had spent abroad. 33 percent of the students, however, stated that the prolongation of studies due to study abroad will be as long as the study period abroad (in a few cases even more).

Table 17
Correspondence of Academic Study Abroad to Typical Amount of Study at Home University, by Country of Home University (percentage)

	Country of home university											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
100 %	47	43	62	46	28	50	30	69	52	50	41	40
75 - 99 %	12	16	19	12	17	17	15	7	19	38	14	15
50 - 74 %	19	27	17	21	32	25	37	10	6	13	21	26
25 - 49 %	15	6	0	9	13	0	9	7	4	0	11	9
Less than 25 %	9	8	2	12	10	8	8	7	18	0	13	10
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(129)	(661)	(42)	(164)	(498)	(24)	(214)	(29)	(113)	(8)	(375)	(2257)

Question 4.10: To what extent does your study at the host university actually correspond to the amount of typical study at the home university during a corresponding period?

Thus, the extent of recognition of study abroad is

- 77 percent, if we address the "degree of recognition" of what was actually studied abroad;
- 73 percent, if the amount of study abroad recognized is compared to that usually taken at home; and
- 47 percent, if we take as a yardstick the students' expectation for studies at the host university not leading to prolongation of the total duration of study.

The proportion of students reporting full recognition is smaller:

- 68 percent of ERASMUS students report that all studies at the host university were granted academic credit or otherwise considered equivalent;
- 40 percent state that all academic study at the host university corresponds to 100 percent (or even more) of typical study at the home university; and
- 56 percent expect no prolongation of study due to their study period abroad.

The proportion of 1988/89 ERASMUS students experiencing full recognition was lower than that of students going abroad in the framework of the JSP scheme who were surveyed in the mid-eighties. A lower ratio of recognition for ERASMUS students is not surprising, because many Inter-University Co-operation Programmes supported by ERASMUS had existed only for a short period at the time this survey was conducted, whereas the JSP programmes included in the survey conducted in the mid-eighties had existed for some years at that time.

Table 18
Ratio of Prolongation of Study and Duration of Study Period Abroad, by Country of Home University
(percentage)

	Country of home university											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
None	82	34	44	75	72	20	34	76	55	80	59	56
Less than 50 %	3	3	8	3	5	3	5	3	5	0	1	4
50 - 74 %	2	12	5	2	4	17	11	6	7	20	1	6
75 - 99 %	3	3	5	0	1	0	6	6	4	0	1	2
100 %	11	48	38	20	18	60	44	9	28	0	38	33
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(199)	(728)	(39)	(266)	(571)	(30)	(233)	(34)	(135)	(5)	(545)	(2785)

Question 4.11: The study period abroad is likely to prolong the total duration of my study by:

7.3 Self-Rating of Academic Progress Abroad

ERASMUS students 1988/89 rated their academic progress during the period at the host university positively. Asked to compare the progress abroad with what they would have expected in a corresponding period at home, they rated it 2.5 on average on a scale from 1 = "much better" to 5 = "much less". They rated their academic progress abroad more positively on average than participants of "Joint Study Programmes" surveyed in the mid-eighties (2.8).

Actually, 55 percent of the ERASMUS students rated their academic progress at the host university more positively than academic progress at home, and 26 percent stated that it was on the same level. Only 19 percent considered the progress abroad to be lower than at home, as Table 19 shows.

The assessment of academic progress abroad varied more according to home country than according to host country. Expectations derived from and conditions of the home university seem to affect the self-rating of achievement abroad more strongly than the specific experiences and conditions at the host universities. Altogether we note that students from northern European countries tend to rate the academic progress abroad less positively than those from southern European countries. Correspondingly, those who spent the ERASMUS-supported study period in northern European countries rate the academic success during that period more positively than those who had spent that period in southern Europe. Ireland turned out to be an exception, for academic progress of ERASMUS students who spent their study period in Ireland, was considered on the same level as those going to Greece and Portugal, the least favourably assessed.

The ratings vary to some extent according to field of study. As far as the fields most strongly represented in the ERASMUS programme are concerned, students of languages and law (mean of 2.2 each) rate the academic progress abroad more positively than students in business and engineering (2.6 each). As regards the smaller fields, students of arts and design as well as those of communication and information sciences (2.2 each) rate most positively, whereas students in geography and geology rate most negatively (2.7).

The rating of academic progress abroad does not significantly differ according to the duration of the study period abroad. It differed somewhat by the timing of the study abroad period: students who had studied three years or more at home before they went abroad assessed the academic progress abroad more positively than those going abroad at an earlier stage of their studies. This, however, might be due to home and host country effects.

Table 19
Academic Progress Abroad in Comparison to Study at Home University, by Country of Home University (percentage)

	Country of home university											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
1 = Much better	23	15	14	33	31	51	24	10	15	10	16	22
2	35	30	25	33	35	30	45	30	31	50	29	33
3 = Same	33	28	20	19	22	14	17	35	35	40	28	26
4	7	20	36	13	9	5	11	20	15	0	21	15
5 = Much less	2	6	5	1	3	0	3	5	4	0	7	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(213)	(782)	(44)	(301)	(658)	(37)	(282)	(40)	(151)	(10)	(618)	(3136)

Question 6.4: How would you rate your general academic progress during your study period abroad, compared with what you would have expected in a corresponding period at your home university?

Those who rated their academic progress abroad to be lower than at home, i.e. about one fifth of the ERASMUS students, were asked to state the major reasons. Of the nine categories provided:

- differences in teaching, learning and examinations modes between the host and the home university (46 percent of those rating their academic progress abroad lower, i.e. 10 percent of all ERASMUS students surveyed) were mentioned most often; followed by
- substantial differences in course content (39 percent, or 8 percent of all respondents);
- lack of guidance and supervision (35 percent or 7 percent respectively); and
- organizational drawbacks, such as timing of courses and exams, accessibility of courses, etc. (29 percent or 6 percent).

Thus, clearly those reasons for limited academic success abroad stated most frequently refer to educational discrepancies between higher education systems or to the academic and organizational setting of the programme. Reasons which could be attributed to the students themselves seem to have played a lesser role: language barriers (26 percent or 5 percent respectively); students themselves did not work well, i.e not hard enough, etc. (19 percent or 4 percent); students' personal problems (12 percent or 2 percent); more demanding courses at host university (11 percent or 2 percent); and finally students' difficulties of living abroad (8 percent or 2 percent). Finally, it is worthwhile mentioning that language barriers were overproportionally often mentioned as a reason for low academic progress abroad by students going to Italy (10 percent of all going to Italy), Portugal (8 percent), Greece and France (7 percent each).

8

Improvement of Foreign Language Proficiency and Cultural Impacts

8.1 Improvement of Foreign Language Proficiency

According to retrospective self-ratings (all ratings were made on a scale from 1= "very good" to 7 = "extremely limited"), ERASMUS students had on average a remarkable level of foreign language proficiency already prior to the study abroad period. Average ratings ranged from 3.4 to 4.2, whereby proficiency in academic settings was rated to be only slightly inferior to proficiency outside classroom. Passive proficiency, i.e. reading and listening, was considered clearly better prior to the study period abroad - about half a scale-point - than active proficiency, i.e. speaking and writing.

On average for the eight ratings before the study period abroad, Greek ERASMUS students considered their proficiency in the major language taught abroad best (3.1), whereas Irish (4.4), Italian (4.3) and British (4.1) rated it lowest. The low proficiency of Irish and British students certainly reflects the fact that their home language is most widely used internationally and thus the need for foreign language learning seems to be less obvious. This corresponds to the fact that students who went to Ireland and to the United Kingdom rated their prior knowledge of the language of instruction at the host university highest (means of 3.4 and 3.5 across the eight ratings). Students going to Portugal (5.0) as well as those going to Italy, the Netherlands (4.5 each) and Belgium (4.4) felt least prepared regarding the host country language.

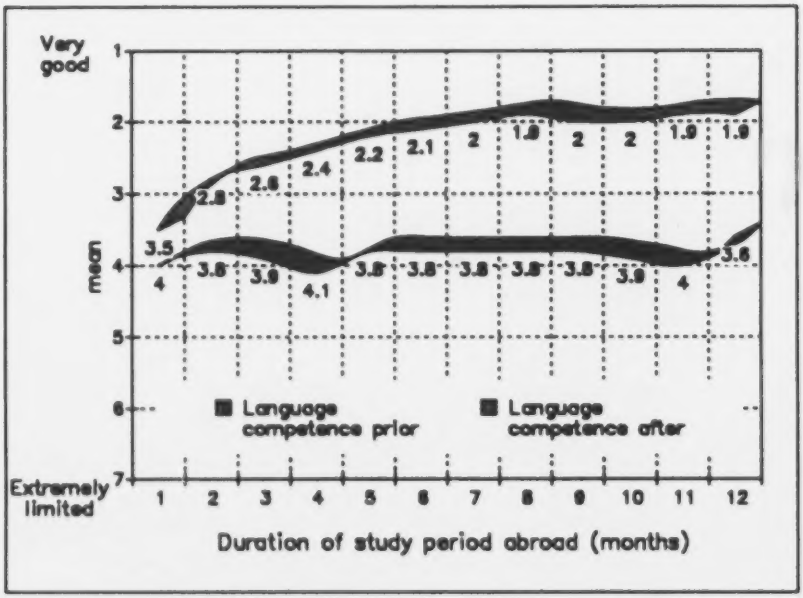
Students enrolled in foreign language studies as well as those in communication sciences felt strongest in the foreign language prior to the study period abroad. On the other hand, students in architecture, fine arts,

geography and geology, as well as engineering rated their prior foreign language knowledge modestly.

The study abroad period proved to be effective in raising the level of foreign language proficiency to a substantial extent. Speaking and writing remained somewhat less highly rated than listening and reading, but improved to about the same extent. Speaking in an academic context (2.4) remained more cautiously assessed than speaking outside classroom (2.1), as Table 20 shows.

In fact, we note a clear positive correlation between duration and the foreign language improvement, but there is not a continuous improvement. As Figure 1 shows, growth does not continue beyond seven months. Passive proficiency already reaches a high level after four months, but "a ceiling" is

Figure 1
Development of Language Competence by Duration of Study Period Abroad (mean)



reached for speaking and writing ability within seven months. In addition, the level of prior foreign language competence seems to be slightly negatively related to the improvement during the study abroad period.

Students less prepared for the host country language obviously improved slightly more, but not nearly to the extent of really balancing the differences. If the scales were valid in measuring equal distances, we could argue that of the differences by home country and host country existing prior to the study abroad, about a third was made up during the study period.

Table 20
Selfrating of Competency in Language of Instruction Abroad After Study Period Abroad, by Host country (mean*)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Reading in academic setting	2.5	2.1	3.1	1.9	2.0	2.3	2.2	1.8	2.8	2.7	1.7	2.0
Listening in academic setting	2.6	2.0	3.0	1.9	1.9	2.2	2.1	1.8	3.0	3.1	1.8	1.9
Speaking in academic setting	3.1	2.5	3.5	2.3	2.4	2.8	2.7	2.1	3.4	3.6	2.2	2.4
Writing in academic setting	3.4	2.6	3.6	2.5	2.7	3.2	3.1	2.2	3.7	3.7	2.3	2.6
Reading outside classroom	2.7	2.0	2.9	1.9	2.0	2.4	2.1	1.7	2.9	2.6	1.8	2.0
Listening outside classroom	2.7	1.8	2.9	1.8	1.9	2.3	1.9	1.7	3.0	3.2	1.8	1.9
Speaking outside classroom	2.8	2.0	3.0	2.1	2.1	2.5	2.1	1.9	3.3	3.7	2.0	2.1
Writing outside classroom	3.2	2.4	3.4	2.4	2.6	2.9	2.9	2.2	3.7	3.6	2.2	2.5

Question 4.7: How do you rate your competency in the (major) language of instruction at the host university (reply only if different from the language of instruction at your home university)?

* On a scale from 1 = "very good" to 7 = "extremly limited"

8.2 Knowledge about the Host Country

Asked to rate 13 aspects notably regarding politics, culture and society, the economic system and the geography as well as the higher education system of the host country (on a scale from 1 = "extensive knowledge" to 5 = "very minimal knowledge"), ERASMUS students admitted a very low level of knowledge of the host country prior to the study period. Levels of knowledge of the host country differed much more between students than between the different aspects of knowledge i.e. if students were well informed they tended to be so about all aspects.

Knowledge of the host country prior to the study period abroad did not differ strongly according to the country of the home university. Obviously prior knowledge of the "smaller" countries of the EC was more limited. As regards fields of study, we note that students in agriculture, architecture, mathematics (3.9 on average) and fine arts (3.8) rated their knowledge about the host country lowest, whereas those enrolled in communication sciences rated their prior knowledge highest (3.1). Students were better informed on those aspects of the host country closely related to their field of expertise, such as students of geography and geology on the geography of the host country.

Upon return from the study abroad period, students rated their knowledge of the host country much higher. The average score of 2.3 indicates an average improvement of 1.2 on the five-point scale. Highest improvement was reported regarding higher education (1.9) and above-average improvement regarding cultural and social issues, except for treatment of recently arrived immigrants, whereas knowledge on political issues and the geography of the host country increased to a lesser extent.

Knowledge of the host country upon return is strongly related to the duration of study, as Table 21 shows. As those staying more than a year report 2.0 on average, one might state that more time is needed than supported by the ERASMUS scheme in order to acquire a "good" knowledge of the host country.

Differences regarding the extent of knowledge of the various host countries were marginal after the study abroad period, if we aggregate the responses to the various aspects, though knowledge of Portugal clearly remained below average.

Table 21
Selfrating of Knowledge About Host Country After Study Period Abroad, by Duration of the Study Period Abroad (mean*)

	Duration of Study Abroad					
	1-2 months	3 months	4-6 months	7-12 months	More than 12 months	Total
Political system and institutions	2.6	2.5	2.3	2.2	1.9	2.3
Dominant political issues	2.7	2.5	2.3	2.2	1.9	2.3
Foreign policy in general	3.1	2.8	2.5	2.5	2.2	2.6
Policy towards your own country	3.2	2.7	2.6	2.4	2.0	2.5
System of higher education	2.6	2.1	2.0	1.8	1.7	1.9
Cultural life (art, music, theatre, etc.)	2.5	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.1
Dominant social issues	2.7	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.1	2.2
Economic system	3.0	2.7	2.4	2.4	1.9	2.5
The country's geography	2.1	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.9
Social structure (family, class system)	2.7	2.3	2.1	2.1	1.9	2.1
Customs, traditions, religion	2.5	2.1	2.0	2.0	1.9	2.0
Treatment of recently arrived immigrants	3.2	2.8	2.6	2.4	2.5	2.6
Sports, leisure, recreational activities	2.9	2.4	2.3	2.1	2.1	2.3

Question 6.2: How would you rate your level of knowledge with regard to the following aspects of the host country, immediately before you went abroad and now?

* On a scale from 1 = "extensive knowledge" to 5 "very minimal knowledge"

8.3 Opinions of Culture and Society

ERASMUS students were asked to rate their opinions of the host country and on the home country both immediately before (retrospectively) and after the study period abroad in respect to ten aspects, such as foreign policy, cultural life and the higher education system. Again, a five-point scale was provided from 1 = "highly positive" to 5 = "highly negative". Altogether, we note that ERASMUS students' opinions of the host country did neither become clearly more positive nor clearly more negative.

A substantial number of students stated that they did not yet have any opinion of their host country before the study abroad period. On average of the ten aspects, this was stated in 21 percent of the cases before the study abroad period and only in six percent upon return. Opinions of the respective host countries varied substantially according to the individual aspects, as Table 22 shows.

The presentation of mean scores might suggest a stability of opinions not very much touched by experiences. Comparing opinions before and after, only 46 percent of the ratings were identical. We note for example that opinions most often change regarding the higher education system of the host country, i.e an area in which all students had first-hand experience; only a fourth of the students kept their opinions stable in this area. Altogether, changes of attitudes in the positive direction took place most often by students who spent their study period abroad in Ireland and Portugal, whereas changes in the negative direction were most often among students who went to France.

Opinions of the home country remained much more stable. On average, 69 percent of the ratings remained unchanged, whereas 18 percent were more positive and 13 percent more negative upon return than prior to the study period abroad. In view of the fact that most students had spent almost all their life in the country of the home university, 31 percent changes of ratings of the home country might be considered to be remarkably high. Again, most changes of attitudes took place regarding the system of higher education.

Altogether we might state that study in another EC country is instrumental in reflecting both the host and the home country and in changing one's opinion of many aspects of the host country and to some extent of the home country as well. This does not lead, however, on average to more positive or more negative attitudes towards the host country or the home country. The value of the study period abroad regarding opinions is not to increase sympathy towards other countries or towards one's home country in general, but rather to provide opportunities for a broad range of experiences which might lead to changes of opinions in many respects.

Table 22
Opinions on Host Country After Study Abroad, by Host Country (mean*)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Post-secondary/higher education in host country	2.6	2.2	1.8	3.0	2.9	2.9	3.0	2.8	2.3	2.9	2.5	2.7
Foreign policy in host country	2.6	2.6	2.5	2.8	3.0	3.3	2.9	2.7	2.6	2.9	3.6	3.1
Cultural life in host country	2.3	2.1	2.2	1.9	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.2
Media in host country	2.8	2.9	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	3.1	3.0	2.7	3.1	2.6	2.7
Customs and traditions in host country	2.5	2.4	2.3	2.0	2.4	2.5	2.2	2.3	2.5	2.1	2.5	2.4
Treatment of recently arrived immigrants in host country	3.2	3.3	2.7	3.1	3.7	3.3	3.4	2.4	2.6	3.3	3.3	3.3
Social structure in host country	2.8	2.7	2.5	2.9	3.0	3.1	2.9	3.0	2.6	3.3	3.3	3.0
Urban life in host country	2.2	2.4	2.1	2.5	2.7	3.2	2.8	2.7	2.3	3.0	2.9	2.7
Governmental domestic policies in host country	3.1	2.7	2.6	3.2	3.0	3.6	3.4	3.4	2.5	3.4	3.7	3.2
Environmental policies in host country	3.3	1.8	1.8	4.0	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.8	2.0	3.8	3.7	3.3

Question 6.3: What was your opinion about each of the following aspects of the host country and the home country immediately before you went abroad? And what is your opinion now?

* On a scale from 1 = "highly positive" to 5 = "highly negative"

9

Comprehensive Assessment by the Participating Students

9.1 Personal Value of Study Abroad

Students were asked to state the extent to which they considered it worthwhile to study abroad as regards such aspects as study progress, career, foreign language proficiency, understanding the host country, travel, or break from usual surroundings. They were asked to rate each of ten aspects provided in the question on a scale from 1 = "extremely worthwhile" to 5 = "not at all worthwhile".

Altogether, students considered the study abroad period supported by the ERASMUS scheme as worthwhile. The average rating for all ten aspects was 1.8., i.e. higher than scale point 2 which could be called "worthwhile". Most positively assessed were cultural and foreign language outcomes: acquaintance with people in another country (1.4), knowledge and understanding of the host country (1.5), and foreign language proficiency (1.6).

Contrasting life experiences as well as expected professional impacts were just as highly regarded as assets of a study period abroad: opportunity to travel (1.7), break from usual surroundings (1.7), and career prospects (1.8).

Contrasting learning experiences, new views on the home country and finally subsequent academic progress were appreciated as well, though with somewhat less enthusiasm: other teaching methods than at home (1.9), new perspectives on home country (2.1), exposure to subjects not offered at home university (2.4), and study progress after return (2.5).

The majority of countries least appreciated for the academic and professional value of studying there, i.e. Portugal (2.9 on average for the four

respective items), Greece (2.5), Ireland (2.4), and Spain (2.3, in contrast to 1.9 in the case of Denmark and 2.0 of the Federal Republic of Germany), were much more favourably assessed in terms of the cultural and experience value of going there. Spain, Italy, Germany and Ireland (1.4) were most favourably viewed as compared to the Netherlands (1.8), Belgium and Portugal (1.7 each).

The assessment of the value of the study abroad period varied, as expected, somewhat less according to home country than according to host country. Spanish students rated the study period abroad most positively (1.7 on average for 9 items), whereas students from Belgium, Germany, Portugal, Denmark, and the Netherlands (2.1-2.0) were slightly more reserved in their judgements. As in the case of the rating concerning academic progress abroad, we note - with a few exceptions - a slight North-South gap, whereby northern European higher education systems are more positively assessed and southern European higher education system less positively.

The longer the duration of the study period lasted, the more favourably it was rated. The means ranged from 2.2 for students who had been abroad for 1-2 months to 1.7 in the case of a period of more than one year.

Differences in the assessment of the value of the study abroad period are relatively small, as far as fields of study are concerned. But we note that students of agricultural fields, architecture as well as geography and geology most highly appreciated the opportunity to travel abroad (1.4 as compared to 1.7 on average). Students of architecture and of geography and geology exposed the biggest gap in a comparatively cautious assessment of the academic and professional value of study abroad on the one hand and on the other a relatively positive assessment of the cultural and experiential value of study abroad. Students of business fields valued the study abroad period highly for the career prospects implied (1.4 as compared to 1.8 on average).

Asked to rate their satisfaction with their study abroad period ("all things considered") on a scale from 1 = "very satisfied" to 5 = "not satisfied at all", ERASMUS students rated 1.5 on average. This was even slightly more positive than the respective rating of JSP students surveyed in the mid-eighties (1.7).

Differences according to home or host country, to duration and fields of study are relatively small and can only be discussed with some caution. Engineering (1.3) and law students (1.4) were most satisfied with the study abroad period. Some reservations were voiced by students of geography and geology (1.8), of architecture as well as of communication and information sciences (1.7).

9.2 Most Striking Experiences during the Study Period Abroad

Problems ("worst things") mentioned referred most often to issues of accommodation. Almost 20 percent referred to accommodation problems (problems of search and quality of accommodation, problems with other people living in the same house, etc.) - an extraordinarily high quota in response to an open question posed. 10 percent of the students addressed issues of accommodation as well in response to the question regarding the most difficult thing successfully accomplished.

As regards the most positive experiences, more than half of the students praised the opportunity of getting acquainted with people - mostly from the host country, but from other countries as well. More than a fourth of the ERASMUS students considered the opportunity of getting to know the host country and its culture and society as the best thing they experienced during the study abroad period. Academic experiences were named by about 10 percent of the students as the best thing that happened to them. As in response to the "closed" question about worthwhile experiences, academic experiences were not as favourably assessed here as personal contacts and cultural experiences.

Academic experiences, however, were in the forefront of reports by the students as regards the most difficult things they achieved during the study period abroad. 30 percent of the ERASMUS students referred to academic issues in this context. About 20 percent of the students reported their success in overcoming problems of understanding, reading, listening and speaking the host country language.

Students from most southern European countries, though mentioning various problems faced in the host country, by and large described the study abroad period most favourably.

9.3 Desired Duration of the ERASMUS Supported Period

Both the positive experiences during the study abroad period and the limits of what they could experience and achieve during their stay lead many students to wish for a longer stay abroad than initially intended or supported. Of all the ERASMUS participants, 68 percent stated that they would have liked to spend a longer period abroad. Those who wished an additional period abroad actually would have liked to stay an additional 8.3 months on average. This would equal an average of 5.5 months for all ERASMUS students. As all ERASMUS students responding to the questionnaire had spent an average of 7.1 months abroad supported by the ERASMUS programme, the desired period of study

abroad supported by the ERASMUS programme, thus, would be 12.6 months on average.

Actually, 27 percent realized an extension of the stay abroad with the help of other means. They extended their stay on average by 5.9 months. This corresponds to 1.5 months extension on average for all ERASMUS students.

10

Determinants of Academic Progress Abroad and Recognition

A statistical analysis was undertaken designed to identify some of the key determinants of academic success of the study period abroad supported by the ERASMUS scheme. Regression and variance analysis was employed in examining the possible impact of personal background variables, major study profile data, academic preparation, assistance and guidance abroad, various academic issues abroad and finally problems experienced during the study period abroad on the academic progress abroad as well as the extent of recognition granted. As the possible factors included determine the extent of prolongation of study more strongly than the extent of recognition granted for courses actually taken and the degree of correspondence between the courses actually recognized and the typical study load for a corresponding period at home, the findings regarding the two latter measures of recognition are not presented here.

As Figures 2 and 3 show, personal background data (age, gender and parental educational background) hardly play any role in explaining the perceived academic progress abroad in comparison to academic progress during a corresponding period at home or in explaining the extent of prolongation of the overall study period due to the study abroad period. As regards the profile of the ICP or the study programme, academic progress abroad and (non-) prolongation is much more clearly linked to the country of the home university than to the host country, the field of study, the duration of the study period abroad or the timing of the study period abroad within the overall course programme.

As regards the students' experiences and activities abroad, we note a stronger link of the possible factors observed to the (self-reported) academic

Figure 2
Determinants of Academic Progress Abroad

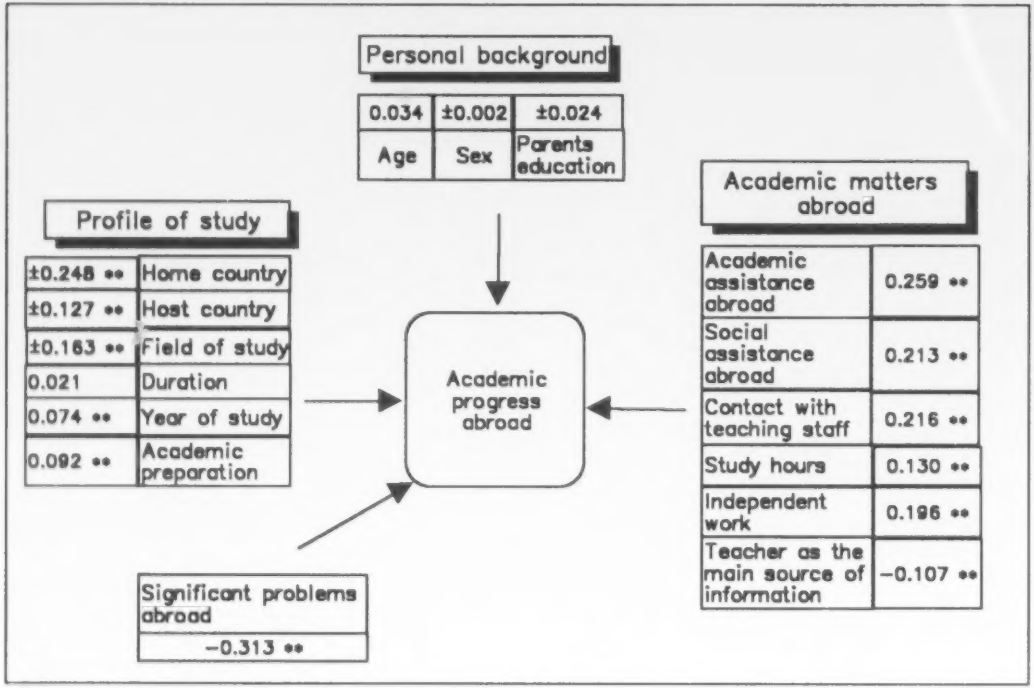
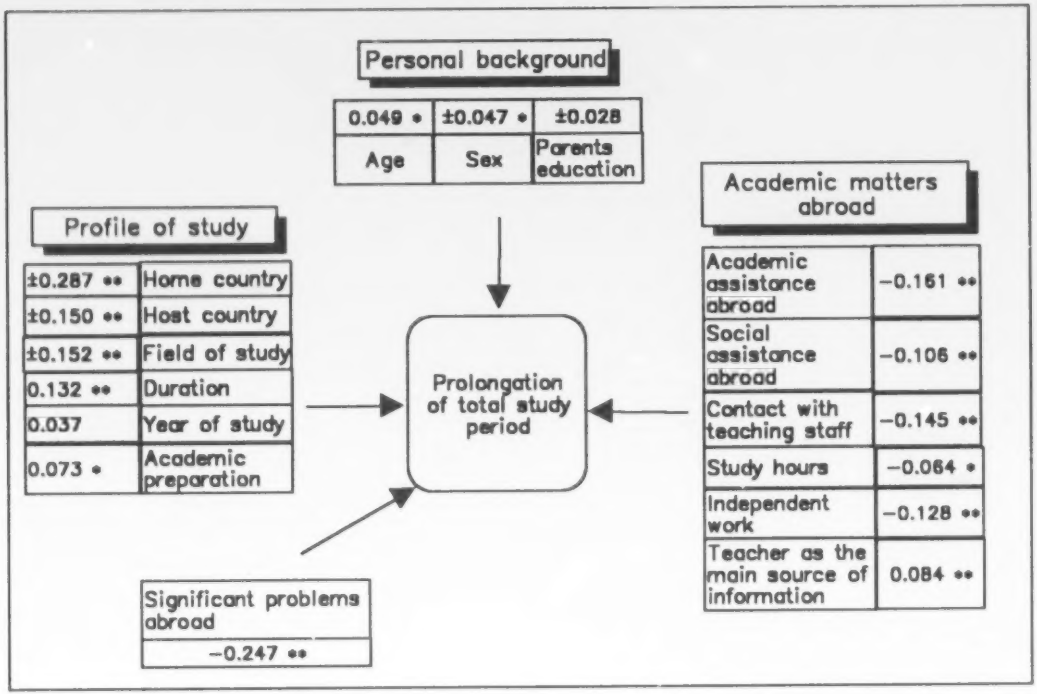


Figure 3
Determinants of Prolongation of Total Study Period



progress abroad than to any of the measures of recognition chosen. As one might expect students naming various problems they experienced at home are most likely to be those who report relatively little academic progress abroad and who expect a prolongation of studies due to the study abroad period. As regards assistance and academic matters abroad, academic assistance abroad and students' contacts with the host university's academic staff turned out to be key factors. Again, they are more closely linked to self-perceived academic progress abroad than to the extent of recognition in terms of expecting no or little prolongation.

The positive impact of guidance and assistance does not mean, however, that students who experienced "spoon-feeding" abroad report highest success. Rather, those students who observe a strongly emphasis on independent study abroad and less emphasis on the teacher as the main source of information seem to study somewhat more successfully abroad.

Altogether, the findings suggest that improvements of the study conditions at the host university for the ERASMUS students would help to increase academic progress during the study abroad period and ensure academic recognition upon return. There is not, however, any single key factor which could be viewed as the major starting point for such improvements. Finally, the differences of academic achievement by home country also suggest that academic preparation at the home university is not a trivial factor for academic success during the study period abroad.

11

Concluding Observations

The presentation of the major findings of the 1988/89 ERASMUS student survey is intentionally very descriptive. Readers are invited to focus their attention on 'interesting' and 'surprising' phenomena according to their respective experience and expertise. A short presentation such as this one does not allow for detailed discussion of the findings and their implications. The following findings, however, certainly stand out and deserve attention - notably since some of them challenge widespread views about the strengths and weaknesses of study in other countries of the European Community in the framework of the ERASMUS programme.

(1) As regards the profile of the participating students, a wide range of fields of study was supported by ERASMUS grants. On average, students were older than 23 years and had completed 2.7 years of study before they went abroad. They spent seven months on average in the host country, and 22 percent of them participated in a work placement while abroad. 54 percent of the ERASMUS-supported students surveyed were female. 37 percent reported that their father, their mother or both of them were college-trained. Most students had spent some period abroad prior to the ERASMUS-supported study period.

(2) We note that participating departments have developed a substantial range of measures for preparing their own students for study abroad as well as providing administrative and academic advice and support for incoming ERASMUS students from other EC countries during the study period abroad. On average, however, students assess these measures somewhat cautiously. Obviously, many of them expect some improvement in these areas.

(3) We note, in most of the topics addressed, striking differences by country - be it the country of the home university or the host country. By and large, conditions and provisions for study abroad vary more strongly by country than

by disciplinary cultures and conditions. Some examples of this are:

- the proportion of students reporting no organized preparation range according to home country from 13 to 88 percent;
- serious academic problems were mentioned, depending on host country, by at least 7 percent and at most 23 percent of the students;
- no support in finding accommodation was reported by 13 percent of the students hosted in the country in which most support was provided and by 51 percent of the students hosted in the country in which respective support was least common;
- less academic progress abroad than at home was reported between three percent and 26 percent of the ERASMUS students.

There seems to be a North-South discrepancy: students from northern countries in the European Community tended to rate their study environment at home relatively positively and assessed the conditions for study in the southern host countries less favourably, whereas students from southern European countries rated their study conditions and experiences abroad during the ERASMUS-supported period more favourably.

(4) There is no single problem considered to be extremely serious by the ERASMUS students. For example, in response to a list of 19 possible problems, 15-26 percent of the students rated nine problems as relatively serious. Among them, too much contact with people from home country (26 percent), accommodation (22 percent), and financial matters (21 percent) were stated most frequently, but academic problems abroad were reported almost as often, notably differences between home and host country regarding teaching and learning styles (17 percent) and taking examinations in a foreign language (15 percent).

(5) On the basis of recent public debates one might have expected that accommodation stood out as the most serious problem. In fact, students mentioned accommodation issues most frequently in response to an open question regarding major problems, but according to the responses referred to above, it is one of three major problems. 18 percent of the ERASMUS students were not provided with any help in finding accommodation. On average students spent only about ten hours for finding accommodation abroad but 22 percent rated the quality of accommodation as bad.

(6) As regards financial issues, the ERASMUS students spent on average 355 ECU monthly at home and 419 ECU monthly abroad (excluding travel to host country, 18 percent more). The costs for return travel to the host country amount to additional 30 ECU monthly costs. Further about 40 ECU seems to be spent on average for keeping accommodation at home, and further 10 ECU on average might be required on average for additional tuition and fees. We

estimate that the ERASMUS grants in 1988/89 on average covered the additional costs for study abroad.

(7) On the basis of prior research we developed three criteria for recognition:

- How many of the courses completed or other formal achievements abroad are recognized upon return by the home university? 77 percent of study actually undertaken abroad was recognized, and 68 percent of the ERASMUS students reported full recognition according to this measure.
- How far does successful and recognized study abroad correspond to a typical study load at home? According to this measure, recognition corresponded on average to 73 percent of typical study at home, whereby only 40 percent of the students reported complete recognition in this respect. As 77 percent of the studies abroad were recognized and as the study load actually taken abroad or the number of courses completed abroad is about one sixth lower than that typically carried out or completed during a corresponding period at home, one could have expected that the academic studies at the host instituition corresponded to a lesser extent to the typical amount of study at home.
- Finally, many ERASMUS students assumed that their study in another EC country will lead to a prolongation of study. If non-prolongation is the measure of complete recognition, only 47 percent of study abroad during an ERASMUS-supported period is recognized.

Recognition of study abroad is unlikely to be recognized completely for all students, because some students take fewer courses, fail some courses or deliberately choose courses not fitting their home curricula in order to broaden their horizon. This notwithstanding, the findings of the survey suggest that the idea of the ERASMUS programme according to which participating departments will grant recognition as a rule, is not (yet) fully implemented.

(8) In contrast, students themselves rated their academic progress abroad very positively. 55 percent considered their academic progress abroad better, and only 19 percent reported less academic progress than during a respective period at home. Even allowing for some overestimation on the part of the students, these findings suggest that there is more academic value to study abroad as judged by the students' themselves than is formally recognized by the home universities.

(9) ERASMUS students acquire substantial knowledge of their host country, but their opinions of the host country on average do not change substantially. Attitudes towards the host country, towards international relations etc. might possibly change in longer cycles than study abroad periods lasting a few months or even a year.

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In 1988/89 some 11,000 European students spent a period of study in another Member State of the European Community with the support of the ERASMUS programme. This study is based on the experiences of 3,212 students who responded to a written questionnaire covering the profile of ERASMUS students, academic and administrative support both by home and host universities, the study abroad experience; accommodation, living costs in the host country and sources of funding, self-assessment of academic achievement, foreign language improvement and cultural awareness.

Im Rahmen des ERASMUS Programms studierten 1988/89 ca. 11.000 europäische Studenten an Hochschulen anderer EG-Länder. Die vorliegende Studie stützt sich auf eine Befragung von 3.212 ERASMUS Studenten zum persönlichen Profil, zur Unterstützung durch die Universitäten in Studien- und Verwaltungsangelegenheiten, zu Lebensbedingungen und Studienerfahrungen im Ausland und zur Selbsteinschätzung der Studienerträge.

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